Middleborough Community Meeting

Date: Wednesday, January 27, 2021
Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

PRESENT

Elected Officials and Middleborough Staff
Leilani Dalpe, Board of Selectmen Chairman Town of Middleborough
Nathan Demers, Selectman Town of Middleborough
Mark Germain, Selectman Town of Middleborough
Norm Orrall, Representative 12th Bristol District
Marc R. Pacheco, Senator 1st Plymouth and Bristol District
David Vieira, Representative 3rd Barnstable
Staff Representative from Representative William Straus's Office

Jed Cornock, SRPEDD
Eric Arbeene, SRPEDD
Leeann Bradley, Town of Middleborough
Janis Akerstrom, Town of Middleborough

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)
Bob Campbell
Kim Dobosz
Mike Fitzgerald
Jean Fox
Holly Palmgren
Jennifer Tabakin

Project Team
Ken Caputo, VHB
Emily Christin, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)
Nancy Farrell, RVA
Lindsey Heffernan, (CPP)
Joe Sgroi, City Point Partners (CPP)
Mike Stiller, AECOM

PRESENTATION[1]

Nancy Farrell, RVA team member and meeting moderator, opened the meeting and went over the protocols for the virtual meeting.

Nancy Farrell introduced the presentation speakers: South Coast Rail Program Director, Jennifer Tabakin; South Coast Rail Director of Community Engagement, Jean Fox; South Coast Rail Director of Design Administration, Bob Campbell and South Coast Rail Director of Construction, Kim Dobosz. Nancy welcomed the attendees and thanked everyone on the team, MassDOT, the MBTA, the town of Middleborough and Chairman Leilani Dalpe for helping to arrange this meeting today.

Jean Fox gave a summary of the project status and update (slide 3) as it pertains to Phase 1 of the overall SCR project. J. Fox said project is still on track for Phase 1 service by the end of 2023 and that construction has started on both lines of the project.

J. Fox also provided a summary (slide 4) of the elements of the Fall River Secondary and New Bedford Mainline packages. J. Fox then went into more detail of the New Bedford Main Line/Middleborough Secondary contract elements (slide 5) which include 27 miles of track, 4 new stations, 1 layover at Wamsutta, 18 Grade Crossings, and 11 Culverts. To put this into context, J. Fox reviewed the first visible steps that are currently happening in construction (slide 6) which include tree clearing, environmental work along the right-of-way, and delivery of supplies. She also noted that work will only take place during the hours of 7am and 3:30pm and that all contracts must comply with health and safety regulations regarding Covid-19.

Holly Palmgren described the steps taken for environmental protection during construction (slide 7) which includes erosion controls, protection fencing, weekly SWPPP inspections, culvert replacements, RAM plans and training for Conservation Commission members to inspect permitted areas.

Kim Dobosz described what more to expect during Construction (slide 8) such as pre-construction pest and rodent management as well as dust control and management. K. Dobosz also mentioned that grade crossing work will have to occur in 24 hour shifts over a weekend to get the work done efficiently.

J. Fox showed a rendering and layout of the Middleborough Station (slides 9 and 10) and pointed out the driveway entrance from Route 105, 500 parking spots, accessible and bus drop-off, bicycle storage and accessible ramp to new pedestrian crossing on Route 28. J. Fox then mentioned the traffic improvements due to the new station which will include: an adaptive traffic control system, new signage and new pedestrian access improvements such as a signal beacon for crossing. J. fox then showed a map of where these improvements will take place as well as a sample of what the Hawk Pedestrian Crossing System will look like (slide 14).

J. Fox mentioned how cooperative the stakeholders in the town of Middleborough have been and how much has been invested in Middleborough in the past due to this cooperation. There has been updated

[1] The presentation is available on the Documents & Meeting Materials page of the project website: www.mass.gov/south-coast-rail.

traffic information, MassDOT has been able to invest $1.3 million to improve the rotary and its operation and in FY15 $8,000 was invested for an Open Space and Recreation Plan.

K. Dobosz then showed pictures of the current construction on the project (slides 17, 18 and 19) which includes site clearing at Middleborough Station and offloading of rail in Freetown.

J. Fox showed a graphic of the schedule (slide 20) and reiterated how the project is on schedule to start service at the end of 2023. J. Fox encouraged attendees to sign up for Construction Update emails from South Coast Rial which will keep residents informed on where work will be starting and when.

Eric Arbenne provided an update from SRPEDD (slide 23). E. Arbenne described the Chapter 40R Zoning and Planning Around the Rail. E. Arbenne described the benefits of a Chapter 40R which include incentive payments to the town as well as density bonuses. The characteristics of this type of zoning include 8-20+ units per acre, 20% of housing units must be affordable, and the town has permission to develop design guidelines.

E. Arbenne mentioned the allowed uses for John Glass Square sub-district which would be under 40R, due to higher density housing and non-residential uses or Residence B district, General Use District or Business District. E. Arbenne showed the current timeline for Middleborough on this issue (slide 26) which is roughly in the middle of the process and explained if it is approved then vote will still have to go through the town.

Jed Cornock noted that the zoning district change from Residence B to General Use historic allows for commercial development while keeping historical characteristics. J. Cornock also mentions that there is website where residents can track the progress of Middleborough's Chapter 40R, www.SRPEDD.org/Middleborough-40r.

J. Fox encouraged everyone to use the hotline, 774-762-7000 (slide 28) if they have any issues due to the South Coast Rail Project and also mentioned that the SCR team is available to meet with residents, business and elected officials during construction to discuss issues and update stakeholders.

J. Fox showed the project website address (slide 29), www.mass.gov/southcoastrail as well as an email address for residents to send comments, southcoastrail@dot.state.ma.us and again the hotline number. She also encouraged attendees to participate in any virtual public meeting taking place involving the project.

Q&A Session:

1. Chairman Leilani Dalpe: Three concerns, 1) Safety on the project regarding WRPD regulation, 2) Traffic Mitigation with the potential of shuttles 3) Smart economic development by widening the bridge over railway to connect to landlocked land. She is hopeful that the South Coast Rail Team will make these items happen.
2. Rep. Orrall: Thanked the team for having this meeting and strong communication. He received complaints about night work that he would like to address and is also really pushing for economic development of the landlocked land.

    a. K. Dobosz said that she is sure the night work was not a product of South Coast Rail and is almost certain that it is freight trains making the noise. She reiterates that we only work during the day on this project so far and when night work is necessary residents will be notified about 2 weeks prior.
3. Rep. Vieira: No question just wanted to state that he was attending to represent the town of Bourne.
4. Mike Solimin (Attendee): Mr. Solimin asked if the pandemic and lack of ridership will affect the funding for the South Coast Rail project.
    a. J. Fox said that this is state money that is set aside for this project specifically, so yes, project will be funded.
5. Allin Frawley (Attendee): Asked what the traffic intersections will be rated after mitigation.
    a. N. Farrell said we did not have that type of information with us that evening. She directed him to the SCR website and the town website but also said we will get back to him with that information.
6. Kerryn Snyder (Attendee): Asked when the recording of the meeting will be up on the website.
    a. N. Farrell said usually the following day but if not within 48 hours.
7. Alan Melchoir (Attendee): Asked if we could speak more on the improved traffic controls on 105, how will they handle rush hour. Also asked if the traffic plans took into effect the Lakeville Hospital.
    a. N. Farrell said yes, the traffic improvements do take into effect the development of the Lakeville Hospital. The development of the Lakeville Hospital project was evaluated assuming that our mitigation was in place and that there does not appear to be any impact going into Middleborough. Coordination of the traffic lights and traffic study shows that a lot of the traffic will be coming off the highway or from the south, so it will not come through the town. she said that Also said that if he sends an email, we can get that information to him.
8. David (Attendee): Asked when the Middleborough Station comes online what happens to the current Lakeville Station.
    a. J. Fox said the Lakeville station will stay there, the MBTA does not like to let go of property that they have, it is currently serving the Cape Flyer and it could be used for overflow so it will stay where it is.
9. Joshua (Attendee): No question but just wanted to express how glad he is that the South Coast Rail Project is finally happening and that he feels it will greatly benefit the economy especially small businesses in the area.
10. George S. (Attendee): He read in the Herald that the deficit of the MBTA is going to increase and asked if that will affect their assessments.
    a. N. Farrell says that is a complex question and that assessments are determined by legislation and believes than any answer would be a little speculation, but they will investigate it and see if they can provide an answer.
11. Arthur Battistini (Attendee): He was attending on behalf of the Historical Society and just wanted listeners to know that the Historical Society will reach out to the residents if there is any new zoning in their area.
12. Donna C. (Attendee): A resident that called about noise during the night.

    a. N. Farrell reiterated that noise it is not from SCR project, and she would need to contact who is making the noise, which the team is happy to help track down.
13. Selectman Demers: Asked if putting signage on the highway to let commuters know the Middleborough Station lot is full would be feasible.
    a. N. Farrell says that the project does not handle the MBTA parking decisions, but she will connect the town to the sector of the MBTA who handles parking to make note of that.
14. Tim Hazelton (Attendee): Asked what the expected parking capacity at the new station is.
    a. J. Fox said there are 500 spaces for vehicles. Based on ridership studies, a lot of those riders were coming from the south so they will now have a closer station to go to since we are building stations further south.
15. Tim Hazelton (Attendee): Asked if there is a draft schedule.
    a. J. Fox said no there is not, but riders can use the current schedule for reference.
16. Joanne Bouve (Attendee): She lives in the Groves and said that the noise is coming from the freight trains but the fact that South Coast Rail has cleared trees from that area, more noise has occurred.
    a. N. Farrell recommended these residents to contact CSX (the freight company)
    b. L. Dalpe said that the town is taking steps toward legal action about this issue. She told these residents to call the health department so their complaint goes on file and they can use as evidence toward CSX.
17. Sen. Pacheco: Asked the team to make sure they send his office all meeting notifications, he asked how many people were on the meeting, stated that he did not like this format of a virtual meeting, and asked if the Middleborough Station will be connecting to the cape.
    a. N. Farrell explained that we can connect him to the group that is handling that study to get him further information.
18. L. Dalpe: Wanted to mention that Alan Slavin the Selectman from Wareham wanted to know any information on any continuation of the line to Wareham. L. Dalpe said that N. Farrell already touched on that and no need to go further.
19. Tracy Craig McGee (Attendee): Wanted to know what is going to be done about the traffic on 105/28 area with 1 lane road diet proposal, and also the bottlenecking under the bridge and how truck traffic is going to affect that.
    a. N. Farrell said that there was a traffic study done and they can make this information available if requested.
    b. L. Bradley said that studies showed road diet will not affect bottlenecking.
    c. B. Campbell said that the road diet is not included in the project at this time. There will continue to be two lanes of traffic in each direction over the two railroad bridges just north of the 28/105 intersection.
    d. L. Bradley wanted to add that the trucks will be prohibited from going through Middleborough. They will be directed to 495 instead of through town.
20. Robert La Tremouille: Asked for meaningful information on platforms connecting to route 128.
    a. K. Caputo said the pedestrian slope walkway to get from the sidewalk to platform will be accessible and also have stairs. There will only be a pedestrian walkway, no vehicular driveway.
21. Tim Hazelton: Asked about SRTA in New Bedford and Fall River.
    a. N. Farrell said the other carriers have been contacted and there have been discussions.

    b. J. Fox noted that as part of an environmental report they had to complete a feeder bus route report, so these conversations are ongoing.
22. Tim Hazelton: Asked if the schedule will be reduced due to longer trip times.
    a. N. Farrell said no that is not anticipated.
23. Allin Frawley: Asked that since the pandemic there has been less ridership into the city, are we still basing Phase 1 of the project on outdated ridership information?
    a. J. Fox: Says that MBTA is going to go ahead with the project, things are already underway, and they do not believe people will stop using trains after the pandemic. We also know that the project affords the region to grow economically due to the connection with Boston.
24. Kevin on behalf of Rep. Straus's Office: Asked about the piece of track connected to the Middleborough Secondary line and the Old Colony line heading south, which is a piece of track that would be used as a shuttle to run to the Cape if created. He is wondering if this track will remain active during this project.
    a. K. Caputo: Said it will remain active.

Nancy Farrell thanked everyone for attending and encouraged people to find more information and sign up for email updates on the website, www.mass.gov/southcoastrail.